



DISPENSING DOCTORS' ASSOCIATION

Dispensing Practices in Scotland

A manifesto for the 2026 Scottish Government elections

April 2026

The Dispensing Doctors' Association (DDA)
Victory Mill, Priestmans Lane, Thornton-Le-Dale,
Pickering. YO18 7RU

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and Scotland**

Summary of Recommendations

The Dispensing Doctors' Association asks Scottish politicians to recommend the following actions to ensure the sustainability and parity of dispensing GP practices in Scotland:

- 1. Support dispensing GPs with an emergency stabilisation payment**
- 2. Fair Baseline Funding Before Reform**
- 3. Implement Reform of Drug Reimbursement Costs**
- 4. Reform the Discount Abatement (Clawback) System**
- 5. Introduce Dispensing Quality Incentives**
- 6. Extend and fund the Digital Prescribing and Dispensing Pathways (DPDP) to dispensing GPs**
- 7. Guarantee All Necessary IT Funding**
- 8. Support Workforce Sustainability and Efficiency**

Key points about GP dispensing in Scotland

- ▶ Dispensing doctors are general practitioners (GPs) who provide a critical, but increasingly fragile, role in delivering primary healthcare to around 217,000 patients in remote, rural and coastal Scotland.
- ▶ These practices are asked by local Health Boards to dispense medicines in remote, rural and coastal communities where population density is too low to sustain a community pharmacy. The GP practice provides both clinical care and medicines supply under strict NHS regulations.
- ▶ In total, around 7% of all prescription items are dispensed by doctors.
- ▶ The unique benefits of the dispensing doctor service are that it provides access to medicines and general healthcare under one roof.
- ▶ Despite their importance, dispensing practices' costs have risen sharply over the past decade, while dispensing fees have not changed since **2002**.
- ▶ Without reform, the continued erosion of dispensing income, combined with exclusion from innovation funding, risks destabilising rural healthcare provision.
- ▶ Across Great Britain, there is a total network of 1,084 dispensing practices.

A dispensing practice serving 1,500 remote, rural, coastal patients may be responsible for every prescription and repeat medicine within a 300+ mile radius — the same workload as an urban practice with multiple pharmacies nearby - but with none of the same infrastructure or funding support.

About the Dispensing Doctors' Association



- ▶ The Dispensing Doctors' Association (DDA) represents around 1,000 dispensing GP practices across the United Kingdom.
- ▶ The DDA works with BMA GPC in Scotland to advocate for fair funding, contractual reform, and the integration of dispensing into national primary care policy.
- ▶ The DDA is represented in Scotland by Scottish representative Dr Hal Maxwell who works closely with the BMA in Scotland to ensure Scottish priorities and rural realities are reflected in decision-making.

82 dispensing practices in Scotland represent just over 9% of all GP practices in Scotland and serve approximately 217,000 patients — nearly 4% of the Scottish population

Full Recommendations

The DDA asks MSPs to recommend the following actions to ensure the sustainability and parity of dispensing GP practices in Scotland

1. Stabilisation and Immediate Support

We ask MSPs to request an emergency stabilisation payment for dispensing GP practices — similar to that received by community pharmacies — to protect services while longer-term reforms are implemented.

2. Fair Baseline Funding Before Reform

We ask MSPs to request that any new capitation model begins from a realistic, uplifted baseline, reflecting 2026 operating costs, staffing levels, and overheads, rather than converting the existing underfunded dispensing fee into a new structure without adjustment.

3. Implement Reform of Drug Reimbursement Costs

We ask MSPs to request that the NHS in Scotland ensures that dispensing practices are treated fairly when purchasing drugs in the marketplace.

4. Reform the Discount Abatement (Clawback) System

We ask MSPs to request immediate access for dispensing GP practices to Discount Not Deducted (DND) protections, followed by a full review of the clawback system with a view to abolition, ensuring parity with community pharmacy and removing penalties where no discounts are achieved.

Full Recommendations

(continued...)

5. **Introduce Dispensing Quality Incentives**

In England and Wales, GP dispensaries receive payment to incentivise safe and compliant dispensing under the Dispensing Services Quality Scheme. The DDA advocates a payment of £4.47 per patient, per year, indexed annually to inflation or DDRB recommendations, to accurately reflect the true cost of maintaining safe, compliant dispensing.

6. **Fund DPDP Implementation for Dispensing GP Practices**

We ask MSPs to recommend inclusion of dispensing GPs in the minimum viable product for the NHS Scotland Digital Prescribing and Dispensing Pathways (DPDP) programme, supported by full capital and ongoing funding within dispensing GP systems, enabling parity of access with community pharmacies and ending digital exclusion for rural practices.

7. **Guarantee All Necessary IT Funding**

We ask MSPs to request that the NHS in Scotland to guarantee ongoing funding for Dispensing GP Practices, providing targeted investment for automation, barcode verification, and secure 24-hour prescription collection technology to improve efficiency, safety, and patient access.

8. **Support Workforce Sustainability and Efficiency**

We ask MSPs to request contractual flexibility that allows longer prescribing intervals and efficiency measures without financial penalty, supporting better use of staff time and improved continuity of care.

Contact the Dispensing Doctors' Association



- ▶ Dispensing practices in Scotland deliver vital services in healthcare and medicines supply in areas that are underserved by other healthcare practitioners
- ▶ DDA members welcome MSPs to visit our dispensing practices to see at first-hand the difference well-funded and well-structured dispensing GP practices can make

Contact the DDA now to arrange a visit:

E: office@dispensingdoctor.org

Tel: **0330 333 6323**

www.dispensingdoctor.org